

Hillandale

News

No 207 December 1995



MECHANICAL MUSIC

Tuesday 30th January 1996



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Hillandale News

The Official Journal of The City of London Phonograph and Gramophone Society

Founded in 1919

Patrons: Oliver Berliner and Kathleen Darby



President: George Frow
Chairman: Dr Peter Martland

Editor: Chris Hamilton, [redacted] Cupar, Fife KY15 4EP
Secretary: Suzanne Lewis, [redacted] Chesham, Bucks HP5 3JB
Treasurer: Chris Hamilton, [redacted] Cupar, Fife KY15 4EP
Tel: [redacted]

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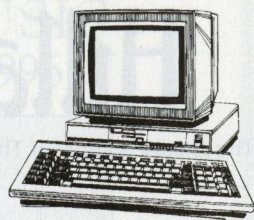
Issue Number 207, December 1995

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Front cover illustration: Fred Gaisberg (left) and friends on the *Umbria*,
coming to Europe in July 1898.
(Photograph by courtesy of Mrs Edith Wyler)

EDITOR'S DESK



George Frow

Our Honorary President, George Frow, received an Award for Excellence in the Vintage Phonograph section in this year's ARSC (Association for Recorded Sound Collections) awards. He received this for his latest book *The Edison Cylinder Companion* (which is available from the Society's Booklist at £30 plus postage). We offer our congratulations to George for this well-deserved honour.

December Meeting

This is a members' night. Bring along one of your favourite records and share it with others and enjoy a seasonal refreshment. All are welcome.

January Meeting

Geoff Edwards will be celebrating the centenary of the cinema with a programme entitled *Seats in All Parts*. Come along and enjoy an unusual night of nostalgia.

Frank Andrews meets Florence Nightingale and Charles Chaplin

In this issue we publish an article by Peter Adamson, *The First London Disc Recordings*. In it he describes Fred Gaisberg's arrival in the U.K. and the dating of the first disc recordings in London. And yes, Frank Andrews and the others were all names on the passenger list of the ship which brought Fred Gaisberg to Liverpool in 1898.

Sandy Forbes

I regret to report the death of Sandy Forbes on 3rd November 1995. Though not a member of our Society, Sandy will be well known to many of our members. He was an authority on British Dance Bands and their music and was the co-author with Brian Rust of *British Dance Bands on Record 1911 to 1945*. Our condolences go to his family.

Seasonal Greetings

The Committee of the Society extend seasonal greetings to all our readers and wish them all the best for the coming year.

Please note that material intended for inclusion in *Hillandale News* must reach the Editor not later than **six weeks before the first day of the month of issue**.

Hence the deadline for the **February 1996** issue will be **15th December 1995**.

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Views expressed in this magazine do not necessarily reflect those of the Editor.

THE FIRST LONDON DISC RECORDINGS

by Peter Adamson

There is a long-standing tradition that the first Gramophone Company disc recorded by Fred Gaisberg at 31, Maiden Lane, London was made on 2nd August 1898. This is based entirely on the evidence of a single disc (E3007) of Syria Lamonte singing *Coming through the Rye*, which is, admittedly, quite clearly dated '8-2-98' (i.e. 2nd August 1898).

I have never been very happy with this proposition, for various reasons: most significantly, there are no other known London discs marked with dates earlier than 8th August 1898 ('8-8-98'); the other reasons are much more vague, and are to do with the 'feel' of the discs.

In this article, I should now like to demonstrate that this particular disc is indeed anomalous: that it was not recorded on the date marked¹ but almost certainly a month later; and, moreover, that it was almost impossible for Gaisberg to have made any London records at all on such an early date. As there are no other known discs marked with a date earlier than 8th August, this leads to the conclusion that the first published London discs to be recorded were those dated 8th August 1898.

When did Gaisberg arrive in London?

This point is of course crucial to the argument: the background to Fred Gaisberg and Joe Sanders crossing the Atlantic in order to help with the urgent setting up of European record manufacture is a story in itself.² Here I shall deal only with settling the dates of Gaisberg's Atlantic passage, his arrival in London and his start on making records.

Gaisberg was dispatched in some haste to London to start making discs for the new Gramophone Company to sell while American supplies of discs were uncertain. No one else in London would have had the secrets of Berliner's record-making processes. Gaisberg would have needed to bring with him a recording machine and then he would have relied on being able to buy the many materials required for his work, once he was in London; a quick, uneducated guess might suggest that this would have required two or three days or more, bearing in mind that the whole process was a trade secret and that he would not be instructing others on his behalf. He would also probably have had to find suitable artists.

So, when did Gaisberg cross the Atlantic? A possible date of departure is provided by a letter (dated 16th July 1898) from the Gramophone Company in London to Eldridge Johnson, which states:

"Saunders and Geysberg [*sic*] are both leaving New York to-day, and between the two of them, we shall soon get into train for making records."³

On the other hand, Fred Gaisberg's own published autobiographical account gives a precisely different indication of how and when he set sail for Europe.⁴

"On July 1st, 1898, I embarked on the old Cunarder *Umbria* ... bound for Liverpool. My baggage consisted of a complete recording outfit plus a twenty-five dollar bicycle with pneumatic tyres, and a notebook stuffed with receipts [*reci-pes*], addresses, and advice in Berliner's own handwriting."

He also gives another clue, regarding his arrival in London:

"I remember arriving in London at the tail end of a strawberry glut... The first evening, which was a Sunday, Owen gave a supper..."⁵

It is well known that this discursive book sometimes confuses various issues by putting things into the wrong temporal order, repeating old *canards*, etc. Jerrold Northrop Moore's elegant remoulding of this material in his book *A Voice in Time*, based on Gaisberg's writings and several other sources, includes a quote from his diary, which suggests yet another departure date:

"July 22 [1898]... Met Joe Sanders. Three of us go downtown, fix up steamer ticket."⁶

Support for the July 1st departure appears right at the end of Moore's book, where there is a charming account by Brian Rust of how, as a young BBC employee, he met Gaisberg in 1949 and told him of the Lamonte disc:

"I reminded him that ... he had arrived in London on July 9, 1898, and the date on the disc was only four weeks later. He smiled. 'Yes, we really hustled to get things started,' he said. 'I didn't know it was August 2 when we made the first one...'"⁷

For some reason the two accounts in Moore's book were not collated - the date 'July 9' is clearly an extrapolation from Gaisberg's 'July 1st' departure date.⁸ Apart from the clash with the diary entry (which implies a date of departure later than 22 July), there are a couple of other problems. July 9 was not a Sunday, and on July 1, the *Umbria* was already only *one day* from Liverpool, having left New York on 25 June.⁹

The *Umbria* trip

By the end of the 19th century, there was strong competition to provide rapid passenger services across the Atlantic, between the Old World and the New. The Cunard Line's several steamers provided weekly services between Liverpool and New York and Boston. The *Campania*, *Umbria*, *Servia* and *Etruria* provided principal services, setting sail each way on Saturdays.¹⁰

On 23rd July, a Gramophone Company letter to Berliner in Washington dealt with the problem of getting suitable pressing material to the new matrix plant in Hanover, and expressed qualms over Gaisberg losing time in experimentation with making new recordings:

"However, within a very few days, we shall be able to decide this, especially after we have had a talk with Geysberg and Saunders [*sic*] who we suppose have left by the 'Umbria' to-day."¹¹

Clearly, there had been a week's delay at the American end. The very next day after Gaisberg 'fixed up' his steamer ticket, the *Umbria* did indeed depart at 11am on Saturday 23 July,¹² bound for Liverpool via Queenstown, Ireland,¹³ and duly arrived in Liverpool on Sunday 31 July.¹⁴ What is more, both Fred Gaisberg and Joe Sanders are in the passenger ('Immigration') list, which survives in the Public Record Office at Kew (London).¹⁵ This is shown opposite.

Unfortunately announcements (under "Home arrivals") in *The Times* (London) do not mention the Queenstown arrival, nor the actual time of arrival at Liverpool. However, the passenger list was signed and dated 30 July 1898, presumably after the disembarkation of the Queenstown passengers when the proper statistics could immediately be ascertained as regards remaining passengers for Liverpool. It thus seems reasonable to assume that Gaisberg and Sanders would have been able to get the special connecting train to London fairly early on the day of arrival at Liverpool (31 July) after a short (overnight) trip from Queenstown, and so the 'first evening' in London would indeed have been a Sunday.¹⁶

That left only one day for Gaisberg to get his many materials (and some artists) together for making any discs at all on 2 August, which was short enough time - but Monday 1 August was a Bank Holiday...¹⁷

The evidence of Gramophone Company letters

An indication of the start of record-taking may be gained from further letters held in the EMI Music Archives at Hayes.

One letter from the Gramophone Company to Eldridge Johnson at Camden, New Jersey, dated 6 August 1898 (Saturday) goes into details about shipping gramophone parts and the cost of record materials, and mentions that:

"Sanders is getting ready to make matrices in Hanover, and within a week we shall be able to produce them. Gaisberg will commence to take records tomorrow, and if all goes well, we hope to have matrices turned out from English records within two weeks from to-day."¹⁸

"Tomorrow" might conceivably refer to Sunday (another part of the letter refers to working on Sunday to assemble gramophone parts), or might just mean "next working day." Another letter, from the Gramophone Company to J[oseph] Berliner in Hanover, dated 10 August (Wednesday), reports:

"Mr Geisberg [*sic*] has commenced taking records, and we shall send you by Parcel Post on Friday, as many zincs as we then have on hand, and trust that you will be able to get these into the Matrix Plant the first of the following week."¹⁹

Between them, these two letters suggest Gaisberg's first London attempts were made some time between 7 and 9 (or 10) August. It may well be that the prediction (on 6 August) of starting 'tomorrow' was misplaced enthusiasm and that the Gramophone Company letter to Hanover (10 August) was sent only when Gaisberg had indeed just started to obtain successful 'takes.'

Gaisberg's notebooks

To get a clearer idea of what was involved in setting up an early recording studio, we must look at Gaisberg's own notes, some of which have already been published along with his diary excerpts.²⁰ These include 'receipts' for making the various chemical solutions, checking batteries, etc. What has not so far been published is the list of purchases he made on various dates after he arrived in London. Fred was probably not a great one for words and numbers, as his peculiar spelling shows, and so these somewhat informal dates are perhaps not quite trustworthy. But they do indicate that he had to buy a lot of stuff over several days, before he could get started.

The lists of expenses are taken from pages in one of Gaisberg's notebooks from 1898,²¹ handwritten in pencil, including the sometimes rather vague dates (no days are named). An attempt is made here to reproduce the layout of the entries, which start with his departure from Washington, DC. *Italic* items indicate later emendations and additions (or what appear to be so). The decimal prices (in US dollars)

Cabin Count

IMMIGRATION.

Ports of Embarkation.	Names of Passengers.	Age of each Adult of 15 years and upwards.				Children between 1 and 12 years.				Infants.	Profession, Occupation, or Calling of Passenger.	English.	Bookish.	Irish.	Foreigners.	Ports at which Passengers have been landed.		
		Married.		Single.		M.		F.									M.	F.
		M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.									
New York	Forward Cabin	19	21	35	10	4	2					35	20	9	24	Liverpool		
	James Connors																	
	Joseph Sanders	20									Electrician							
	Edw. Gaisberg			26							Agent							
	...																	
GRAND TOTAL...		132	64	28	14	64	32	46	150	92	332	189	580					

I hereby Certify, that the above is a correct Return of the Names and Descriptions of all the Passengers and Cabin Passengers brought to this Country in the Ship Umbria, and also of the Births and Deaths on the Voyage.

Signed, Thomas Gutter Master.
 Port, Liverpool
 Date, 30 July 1898

Three extracts from the passenger list for the Umbria, New York (23 July 1898) via Queenstown to Liverpool (31 July 1898). [Crown copyright]
 Here, "electrician" implies an electrical engineer, and "expert" would be a term assumed by Gaisberg to cover his special (secret) professional status.
 At this date, Joe Sanders was still unmarried.

Trip to Europe
July

Expense			
21	R.R to N.Y.	6 50	[railroad to New York ²³]
21	food	1 00	
"	Lodging	1 00	
22	Hotel	2 50	
"	Baggage express	1 00	
"	Telegram	.25	
	R.R TO LONDON ²⁴	5 00	[this and next entry presumably 31 July]
	tips +	5 00	
31	Luggage transportation	2 00	
31	Breakfast (Cecil) (Joe & I) ²⁵	.65	[Hotel Cecil, Strand]
"	Excess luggage on	\$1 50	[\$150? but either figure seems unlikely]
Aug	steamer		
1	3 day's [sic] at Cecil	4 25	[presumably to 2/3 Aug]
	Cab	25	
	Tips	25	

[opposite page:]

	Due [...] Joe	5.00	[obscure]
	I owe for .	/\4p	["\\" obscure marks]
31	Breakfast	.65	[=31 July?]
	luggage	.50	

[separate pages at end of notebook:]

Hardware ²⁶			
Aug 3	Hardware	9/	["3" changed from "2"? - the digit is obscure]
	"	1/3	
	1 gal. coal oil	1/6	[?paraffin (kerosene)]
	glass jar	6p	
	earthenw[are]	3/	
	Pitcher & jar	2/10	
	Hardware	4/	
	Handles	3p	
	Electrical	5/9	
	Soldering iron & acid	1/6	[acid for flux, or for etching?]
	gasoline & tank	1/14	[£1 14s?]
	scissors	1/	
	Oil Cloth	4/6	
	Tin ware	4/10	

passed in.

[heavy line across page]

Aug 4	Japan[n]ed panes (2)	4/2	[panel(s)?]
" "	Cotton cloth	2/	
" "	linoleum 6x10	10/8	[presumably 6x10 feet]
" "	deposit on horns	4/6	[deleted with 2 lines]
" 5	5 bottles	2/	
" "	10 sign boxes	10p	

[next page of expenses follows other notes, and starts with a useful address:]

Alochol [sic]
J. Burrows²⁷
Coal Street
Chelsea
Grain Spirits)
Indian Long[?] cloth #90

	Corks	2p	
	Refrigatorator [sic] pan	2/6	
Aug 7	Bucket	9d	[7 Aug was Sunday!]
	Towells [sic] (9)	7/10	
	Bus	1/4	[probably 1s 4d rather than 1 farthing (1/4d)]
	Rubber bulb	1/	
	3 pts Absolute Alco[hol] ²⁸	12/	
	Bottle	9p	
Aug 7	Pan	6 1/2p	["8" deleted with three lines]
Aug 7	Ice	6p	["7" changed from "8"]
" 8	"	6p	
	Tubing	1/3	
	Bottle	8d	
	Sheet zinc	3/	[a standard sheet ²⁹]
	Shears	2/6	
	Coppe[r] wire	4d	
	Ice	6d	
	Glasses	3 1/2d	
12	Ice	6d	
	Granit[e] pans	2/	
	Electric tape	1s	
13	Matches	2d	
	Ice (2 days)	8d	

[next page: two addresses, the first not in Gaisberg's hand, here shown side by side for convenience]

Alma E Hall³⁰
% City Bank
Limited
London

5545 Washington Av
Chicago
Ill[inois].

[entries on a further separate two pages:]

	England		
98	Lab. Expenses		
Aug 15	music "Pizzicati"	1/3	[?Pizzicato from <i>Sylvia</i> (Delibes) ³¹]
18	sawdust	6d	
	bottles	2/	
	song (Jack's the Boy)	4/	[from <i>The Geisha</i> (Jones) ³²]
	sawdust	1/	
Aug 29	pan (etching)	1/	
	song book	13 1/2s.	[?13s 6d]
Sept			
1	Mica	7/6d	
	Bus fare	6d.	
5	Tips	4d	
"	theatre ex.		[no expense noted]
	[?]ooking for orches[tra]	6s.	[?booking ?looking]
14	Dinner	2s.	
	Bus	1s.	
	looking for band	2s.	[?booking]
	Telegram (Praag) [sic]	1s	
	Bus	4d	
	music (orch. Nat Anthm German)	3/6	[German National Anthem ³³]
	Tin sheet	1/	
	cab for Music	1s.	[?Masie]
	cotton cloth		
Sept 16	dinner	3s.	
Sept 19	dinner	3s.	
Sept 21	dinner	3s.	

were generally written into delineated columns but without decimal points. Sterling prices (shown as shillings/pence) sometimes have the correct abbreviation "d" for (pre-decimal) pence, sometimes "p" instead. The conversion rate of the time was around \$4.87, or conveniently near \$5, to £1.²² Some editorial additions are shown, together with comments [both in brackets] (see pages 414 and 415).

The basic process of making discs has been described in various places: essentially, Emile Berliner's technique was to cut the sound-modulated spiral groove through a thin protective wax covering on a zinc disc. After being etched in chromic acid, the resulting *positive* (and playable) zinc disc was then cleaned and electroplated to form a *negative* stamper or matrix, from which further positive pressings could be made. Sanders had gone on to the record pressing-plant at Hanover with the instructions for making matrices, and Gaisberg stayed in London to make the original zinc recordings.

It is interesting to note that Fred did not mention zinc (or the shears to cut it with) until August 8. However, it does seem that his grasp of the day's date was a little tenuous: it is most unlikely that absolute alcohol, or for that matter buckets, were for sale on a Sunday in the London of 1898.³⁴ He seems to have had some doubt about the change from 7 to 8 August, too. This throws a distinct shadow of doubt over the accuracy of the dating '8-8-98' on the discs, which certainly appears to be in Gaisberg's hand.

Some conclusions about the date

If Gaisberg's dating was one day out, the first possibility would be that he bought alcohol on the Saturday (6 August), but then bought zinc and shears on the Sunday (7 August) - almost certainly untrue. It would mean that he also made discs on the Sunday; although he might very well have been working on Sunday, as suggested previously,³⁵ there are only a few instances of the early discs from 1898 to 1901 being directly dated as made on Sundays. Otherwise, he bought alcohol on the Monday (8 August) and made discs (and bought the zinc and shears) on the Tuesday (9 August). Both these assume, of course, that 'Aug 8' in the notebook and '8-8-98' on the discs mean the same thing.

The vagueness of Gaisberg's notebook date 'Aug 3' (changed from 'Aug 2'?) suggests confusion over the start of the previous working week (a Tuesday, because of the Bank Holiday Monday). At the end of that week the dates jump from 5 August (Friday) to 7 August (Sunday), compounding the likelihood that

'Aug 7' in the notebook really means the Monday (8 August); this in turn would support '8-8-98' on the discs being a mistake for Tuesday 9 August.

Altogether, it would seem sensible to suspect that the marked date '8-8-98' is probably in error and that any correction should be taken in the direction of 9 August 1898 (Tuesday).

Syria Lamonte's disc

Now let's see how the '8-2-98' Syria Lamonte disc E3007 might fit into the pattern of other early London discs from late 1898. First of all, it can be shown that it does not fit into the earliest 'design' of discs; on the contrary, it has features which allow its context to be placed in early September, rather than in early August 1898.

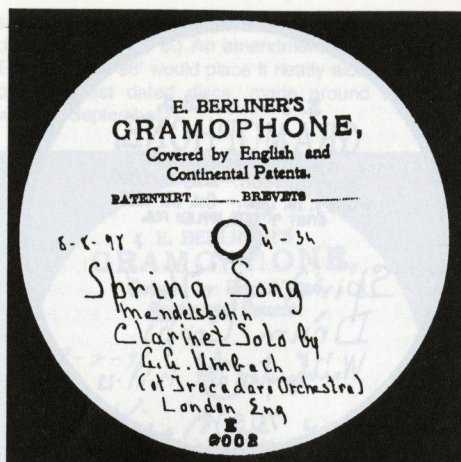
The easiest way to deal with this is to have a look at the sequence of "label" designs on the earliest London discs. These are of course all "Berliners," which are single-sided 7-inch discs without paper labels: the title, dates, etc and heading information were scribed or impressed along with the recording through the wax covering the zinc master, and were therefore etched at the same time and so pressed into playable copies along with the record groove.³⁶

I have taken the liberty of reproducing these entirely black "labels" in negative, so that the information stands out more clearly as black on white (rather than dull grey on black).

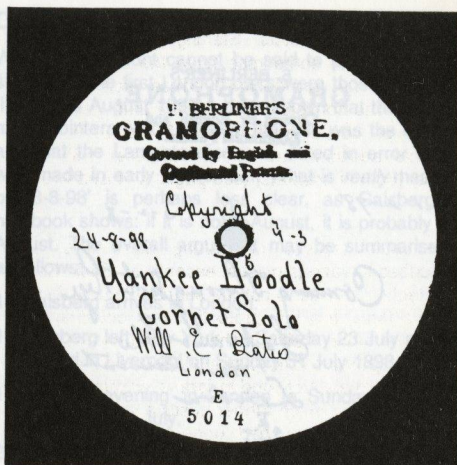
For the purposes of this discussion, the sequence of design changes may be indicated by distinguishing features, as follows:

1. Early August 1898 (8th):

'PATENTIRT.... BREVETS....' appears printed below the main heading; 'London' sometimes appears as 'London, Eng' and the date may include '1898' (rather than '98'); note that the order of date '8-8-98' is ambiguous - either '8' could be regarded as the month, or as the day; the catalogue number was usually *raised* embossed (i.e., embossed into the *stamper* rather than into the master zinc, so that the digits stand proud of the final discs).³⁷ See picture 1.



PICTURE 1



PICTURE 2



PICTURE 3



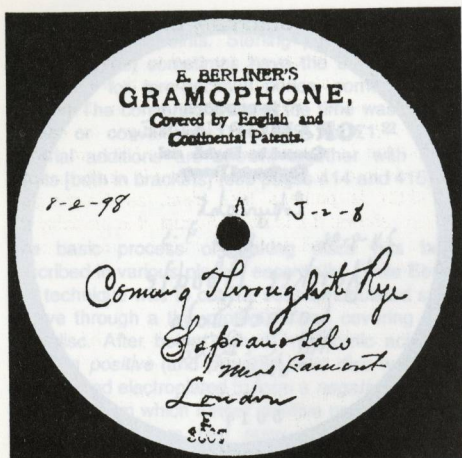
PICTURE 4

2. From mid-August: 'Copyrighted' or 'Copyright' (handwritten) appears below the heading; the date is in 'British' order (e.g. '24-8-98'); the catalogue number is *sunken-embossed* (i.e., embossed into the zinc master, and so sunken into the surface of the final discs). See picture 2.

3. Late August: No 'Copyright' appears below the heading; otherwise as no 2. See picture 3.

4. Early September: the date is in 'American' order (e.g. '9-2-98'); otherwise as no 3. See picture 4.

The Lamonte disc, according to this classification, would seem to fit very firmly into type 4, that is, early September, as it has none of the distinguishing August features but has a date in 'American' order. See picture 5.

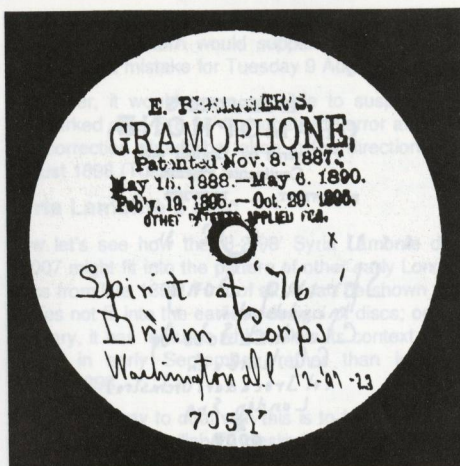


PICTURE 5

The change from 'British' to 'American' date order is significant, as it was a change that lasted, with hardly a break, well into 1899 (when dates on discs were discontinued for a while). This means that a date '9-8-98', for instance, is likely to be 8 September rather than 9 August, and other factors, such as 'label' design, have to be taken into account. It has not been possible to determine, even by guesswork, exactly why the change was made. At this point the marked dates of known discs (and of Gaisberg's notebook entries) jump a few days, from Monday 29 August to Thursday 1 September, which was an opportunity for change (or for error). Gaisberg himself seems to have been somewhat flexible in his dating, even to putting the year in the middle (for instance, '12-'97-23') as some of his earlier American discs show. See picture 6.

Some impending confusion is suggested by one disc (E6271 banjo duet) which is dated '28-9-98'; as it is in 'British' order, this might well be taken to mean '29-8-98', and thus place the disc with others by the same artists. See picture 7. The other discs from 28 September are dated in 'American' order '9-28-98'. A few of those banjo duet discs are dated '28-8-98' (a Sunday) which might be an error for either 25 or 29 August - and so on. The various possibilities are unfortunately rather inconclusive, except to demonstrate that things went wrong round about the change from August to September 1898.

And then there is the matter of who was actually writing the dates. Gaisberg himself has described the handwriting on this disc, when Rust met him and showed him a copy in 1949:



PICTURE 6

"Ah yes ... that's my secretary's writing.... That's mine.... Ah, there's the date."³⁸

Since the 'J-2-8' technical marking is evidently in Gaisberg's hand, the title and artist information (which is not) may therefore be taken to have been written by Gaisberg's secretary, possibly along with the date (which is also not in Gaisberg's hand).³⁹ In fact, the mistaken '8-2-98' might even have been suggested by Gaisberg's 'J-2-8'.



PICTURE 7

The only other disc known to me with the 'secretary' handwriting is E507 *King Cotton March* (Hotel Cecil Orchestra), which is dated '9-2-98', which again

supports the suggestion of error in the Lamonte disc date. (See picture 8.) An amendment of the date of E3007 to '9-2-98' would place it neatly along with her other earliest dated discs, made around the first week of September.⁴⁰



PICTURE 8

The first London discs

It is perhaps appropriate to finish this account by listing the records made on that day in August 1898 when Gaisberg inaugurated the British disc recording industry. The following discs dated '8-8-98' are known to exist, and it is reasonable to say that they are the first (issued) gramophone discs to be recorded in London:

E5016 **C Burgess** (cornet): My Pilot o'er life's sea

E5502 **Mr Castle** (piano): Under the Double Eagle, March (J F Wagner)

E6000 **A A Umbach** of the Trocadero Orchestra (clarinet): Variations brillantes (Müller)

E6000X [another take]

E6001 **Umbach**: Melodie dei Puritani (Bassi)

E6002 **Umbach**: Spring song (Mendelssohn)

Within the next week or so, records were also made by **Will E Bates** (cornet), by **Tom Birchmore**, **John Morton**, **Tom Simmonds** (of the Moore and Burgess Minstrels), and by **Ted Hanley**. Then there were discs by the **Hotel Cecil Orchestra**, **Mays and Hunter** (banjo duet), **Master John Buffery** (boy soprano) - and on 19 August the first by the famous Savoyard **H Scott Russell**.⁴¹

Conclusion and summary of argument

While this account cannot be said to prove conclusively that the first London discs were those bearing the date 8 August 1898, I have shown that there are many pointers which suggest that this was the case, and that the Lamonte disc was dated in error and was made in early September. What is *really* meant by '8-8-98' is perhaps less clear, as Gaisberg's notebook shows: if it is not 8 August, it is probably 9 August. The overall argument may be summarised as follows:

1. Gaisberg arrives in London:

1a. Gaisberg left New York on Saturday 23 July and arrived in Liverpool on Sunday 31 July 1898.

1b. His 'first evening' in London (a Sunday) would have been 31 July.

2. Gaisberg makes preparations:

2a. The next day (Monday 1 August) was a Bank Holiday, which would have precluded purchase of required materials.

2b. His notes indicate several days of buying materials etc, starting on 'Aug 2' [or '3']. 'Zinc' and 'shears' appear only on 'Aug 8'.

2c. A Gramophone Company letter (Saturday 6 August) says he is starting 'tomorrow' which could mean 'next working day' (8 August).

3. Syria Lamonte disc: date order anomaly:

3a. The Syria Lamonte disc is dated in American order '8-2-98'.

3b. It also lacks other features common to all other earliest London discs; in particular:

3c. All other discs before September are dated in British order (8-8-98 being ambiguous) and American order dates appear only from September onwards.

4. Syria Lamonte disc: date error:

4a. There is evidence suggesting that there was confusion with dating around the end of August and start of September 1898.

4b. The Lamonte disc has unusual handwriting (Gaisberg's secretary?) matching that on one other known disc from this period, which is dated '9-2-98'. Thus it was probably made on 2 September 1898 and mis-dated '8-2-98' in error.

5. Earliest London discs dated '8-8-98':

5a. Since all the other earliest surviving dated London discs are dated '8-8-98', then these were almost certainly the first publishable discs made in London.

5b. Any remaining error in this date is according to the accuracy of the date on the discs. In view of Gaisberg's notebook date of 7 August (Sunday) being clearly incorrect, the '8-8-98' date is likely to be one day out (in the direction of Tuesday 9 August).

Acknowledgments

The picture of the Syria Lamonte disc E3007 and excerpts from the letters from the Gramophone Company in London are reproduced by courtesy of EMI Music Archives.

The excerpts from the passenger list of the *Umbria* arriving at Liverpool 31 July 1898 (Public Record Office, Kew, document BT26/122) are Crown copyright and are reproduced with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

I must also thank Edith Wyler, for giving me access to Fred Gaisberg's photograph albums, and for permission to reproduce the picture of Gaisberg on board the *Umbria* and the excerpts from his unpublished notebooks; Isabella Wallich, for some details regarding her uncle Fred Gaisberg; the Merseyside Maritime Museum, Liverpool, for assistance with dating the movements of the *Umbria*; the National Railway Museum, York, for rail connections with American Sailings; Christopher Hayman, Managing Director of Hayman Ltd, Witham, Essex, for information on the history of James Burrough Ltd, distillers; Jim Birch, Zinc Development Association, London for the information on Gaisberg's "Sheet zinc"; Brian Rust, who introduced me to the Lamonte disc and its attendant difficulties, and who was open to alternative suggestions; Alan Kelly, for sharing with me his listing of early London recordings; Peter Martland, for drawing my attention to the letters in EMI Music Archives; and not least Ruth Edge, EMI Music Archives, for her patient assistance with my viewing a number of the early London discs not in my own collection and for permission to photograph the Lamonte disc.

Notes

1 It is worth pointing out that (as Alan Kelly has discovered) many discs, especially early wax-process recordings from 1900, are known to have been marked with dates several days after the true recording date, as part of later processing. However, in such a tightly-knit venture as the early Gramophone Company, it is reasonable to assume that the dating of discs was dealt with immediately, as an integral part of the identification of the recordings. Thus, errors apart, the dates inscribed on the discs may be taken to be close estimates of the dates of recording. An important aid to dating Gramophone Company (or any other) discs, a *contin-*

ous series of matrix numbers, did not start until November 1898; the earlier discs have at most a *daily serial number* to cross-check against the date. (Alan Kelly: unpublished listing of early London records; see also: Brian Rust, 'British Berliner, G&T and Zonophone 7-inch records,' *Talking Machine Review* [Bournemouth], 63-64, Autumn 1981, p.1726 onwards).

- 2 See S.P. Martland: *A Business History of the Gramophone Company Ltd, 1897-1918* unpub. PhD thesis, Cambridge University, 1992. 'The beginnings of The Gramophone Company', *Hillandale News*, 200 (October 1994) pp. 123-6.
- 3 EMI Music Archives, Hayes, Middlesex.
- 4 F.W. Gaisberg: *Music on Record* (London, Robert Hale Ltd, 1946), Chapter 2, 'We go to Europe,' p.27. Originally published as *The Music goes Round* (New York, Macmillan 1942).
- 5 *Music on Record*, Chapter 2, p.28.
- 6 J.N. Moore: *A Voice in Time* (London, Hamish Hamilton, 1976), Chapter 3, p.28; published also in USA as *A Matter of Records* (New York, Taplinger, 1977). This passage is quoted also in extensive excerpts from Gaisberg's diaries, published in *Talking Machine Review*, 52-53, June-August 1978, p.1381 onwards.
- 7 *A Voice in Time*, Chapter 23, p.242.
- 8 This extrapolation was confirmed to me by Brian Rust (telephone conversation, 26 November 1993).
- 9 *Lloyd's Weekly Shipping Index*, [London] 8 July 1898, p.59.
- 10 See, for instance, the advertisements for "American Sailings" in the *Timetables of the London & North Western Railway*, May 1898, p.183. The 7,718 ton *Umbria* (together with her sister ship *Etruria*) was built by John Elder & Co, Glasgow in 1884, and first sailed on 1 November 1884. These two ships began with 550 First and 470 Steerage Class berths, and were altered (around 1890) to 650 First, 160 Second and 250 Steerage class. They were the last North Atlantic express steamers to be fitted with compound engines and the last single screw record-breakers. The *Umbria's* service speed was 19 knots (35km/h), and she was capable of making the journey across the Atlantic in well under 7 days. She later helped to take troops to the Boer War and made her final voyage in 1910. (N. R. P. Bonsor: *North Atlantic Seaway*, vol. 1, rev. edition, David & Charles, 1975, pp.96-7. Commander C. R. Vernon Gibbs: *Passenger Liners of the Western Ocean*, 2nd edition, Staples Press Ltd, 1957, p.71.)

- 11 EMI Music Archives.
- 12 *The Times*, London, 25 July 1898, p.8.
- 13 Queenstown was, from 1849-1922, the name used for C  bh, County Cork, Ireland (cf. Kings-town, 1821-1921, for the port D  n Laoghaire, Co. Dublin). (Adrian Room: *Place-name changes since 1900: A World Gazetteer*, Routledge and Keegan Paul, London, 1980.)
- 14 *The Times*, London, 2 August 1898, p.4; *Lloyd's Weekly Shipping Index*, 5 August 1898, p.59.
- 15 Public Record Office, Kew: document BT26/122. Gaisberg refers to having met Burt Shepard on this transatlantic crossing - Shepard was the mainstay of popular song recordings for the early Gramophone Company in London, often masquerading as Charles Foster: however, there is no sign of him (or any likely pseudonym labelled with a suitable profession) in the passenger list. (See *Music on Record*, Chapter 3, p.42.)
- 16 "The Steamers of this Line come alongside the Liverpool Landing Stage to land or embark Passengers without the intervention of Tenders, and London Passengers, by Special Trains, depart from or arrive at the Riverside Railway Station on the Quay adjoining." (From Cunard advertisement in "American Sailings"; see note 10.) Of course, only the outward railway journeys were timetabled; on Saturdays the "Special Express Vestibuled Trains [i.e., having corridor connection between open-plan carriages] with Luncheon Cars attached" left London Euston at 12 noon, travelling non-stop to Liverpool in 4 hours. (*Bradshaw's General Steam and Navigation Guide...*, July 1898, p.312) High water times at Liverpool (30th July, 21:14; 31st July, 09:44) indicate possible arrival times for the *Umbria* (See, for example, contemporary daily tables in *The Scotsman*)
- 17 In England and Wales, a Bank Holiday is a statutory public holiday.
- 18 EMI Music Archives.
- 19 EMI Music Archives. This promise was rather optimistic: dated pressings have been discovered for only 6 discs marked 8 August, 1 from 11 August and 3 from each of 12 and 13 August, a total of 13 zincs; so the first week of recording was perhaps not very successful. The following week yielded 26 known dated usable zincs, and things picked up from then on. It must be remembered that there are a few records from this period without discernible date. (Alan Kelly, unpublished listing of early London discs.)
- 20 *Talking Machine Review*, 52-53, June-August 1978, p.1381.
- 21 These notes are reproduced by courtesy of Edith Wyler.
- 22 Gaisberg's notebooks give his own short table of British currency and a conversion to US currency, based indeed on a handy \$5 to   1 (together with a reminder of how 2 1/2d - two-pence halfpenny - was to be pronounced!):
"1 pound sterling    = 20 shillings / 1 shilling [...] = 12 pence / 1 shilling = 25 cents / 6 pence = 12 1/2 cents / tuppence hapenny (2 1/2 pence)"
- 23 12.45 train from Washington, DC, "via Pennsylvania Railroad" (Gaisberg diaries, *Talking Machine Review*, above)
- 24 Single (i.e. one-way) rail ticket, 2nd class (of 3), from Liverpool to London (Euston), cost 20s. 8d. (*Timetables of the London & North Western Railway*, May 1898, p.157)
- 25 "Breakfast" at the Hotel Cecil on 31 July suggests either a very early start from Liverpool, or a prepayment of a meal for 1 August, or an error in the date.
- 26 There is no note of purchases of the several chemicals, detailed in Gaisberg's notes on the matrix process, such as "copper amonia," "nickle salts" and "synide" (copper cyanide), not to mention silver anodes. These items would not have been needed for Gaisberg's production of zinc masters in London, but would have been used by the Hanover plant for making matrices. See *Talking Machine Review*, 52-53, June-August 1978, pp.1381-2.
- 27 This must be "Burrough James (Ozone & Hermit), whiskey merchant, liqueur & wine importer, rectifier, methylated spirit maker & naphtha distiller, Distillery, Cale street, Chelsea, [London] SW." *Post Office London Directory*, 1897 (Kelly & Co Ltd, December 1896). James Burrough Ltd expanded after the Second World War, concentrating on absolute alcohol and the popular 'Beefeater' gin; the company remained in family control until bought by Whitbread in 1987 and then by Allied Domecq in 1990. The Fine Alcohols Division was bought back from Whitbread in 1988 by Christopher Hayman, great-grandson of James Burrough, moved to Witham (Essex), and is now renamed Hayman Ltd.
- 28 Berliner discovered that clogging of the recording stylus (by swarf and dust) was prevented by moistening the wax-covered zinc with absolute alcohol. (See British Patent 7204, 1888, p.3.)
- 29 Three shillings ("3/") was just about the right price for a standard 8 x 3 foot sheet of zinc of standard 10 gauge (0.0196 inch), weighing about

- 18 pounds (2.44m x 0.91m, 0.5mm, 8.2kg). This was probably guillotined by the supplier into manageable squares of 7 inches (17.8cm), and then trimmed by Gaisberg (using the shears) to 7-inch circles, enough for 65 recording blanks. I am indebted to Dr Jim Birch of the Zinc Development Association, London, for seeking out the relevant information and making the calculations, based principally on a contemporary table of sheet zinc costs in USA and Europe (Walter Renton Ingalls: *The Production and Properties of Zinc*, published by The Engineering and Mining Journal of New York, 1902, p.55).
- 30 Alma Hall was a 17-year-old girl Gaisberg met on the *Umbria*, she was travelling with her mother (passenger list, Public Record Office document BT 26/122) and appears in some of Gaisberg's photographs taken on board during the crossing. This may have bearing on Gaisberg's diary entry for 9 December 1899 which mentions "breaking off of the engagement between Miss Hall and myself due to Mrs Hall attempting to force a speedy marriage" (see *A Voice in Time*, p.40).
- 31 Perhaps for piano recording E5500, not noted by Kelly or Rust (see above); the replacement recording E5500X is known (dated 5 December 1898).
- 32 The first recording by H Scott Russell, on disc E2005 (dated 19 August 1898) (Kelly, Rust; see above).
- 33 At first sight this would seem to be *Heil dir im Siegerkranz* which was recorded by the Trocadero Orchestra on disc Gy535 (dated 15 September 1898); but this song has the same tune as *God save the Queen*, and would be too familiar to require music! Perhaps it was *Was ist des deutschen Vaterland?* (on Gy548, 26 September 1898), or the 'Preussisches Nationalhymn' or 'Bayerisches Nationalhymn' (both given on Gy549, same date).
- 34 Christopher Hayman, of Hayman Ltd (see note 27, above), confirms that absolute alcohol would not have been sold by Burrough's on a Sunday, and that Monday would have been rather more likely than Saturday for such a sale. Alas, records have not been kept which might have indicated precisely on which day Gaisberg bought his absolute alcohol. (Letter to the author, 8 September 1995.)
- 35 Isabella Wallich (Gaisberg's niece) confirms that he would, and did, work on Sundays when artists' appointments demanded it (letter to the author, 31 July 1995).
- 36 The famous 'recording angel' trademark did not appear until the end of September 1898; the earlier discs carry it only when in the catalogue long enough for it to be added retrospectively (as a raised-embossed, rather than etched, figure).
- 37 An exception to this is disc E6000X, presumably processed later as a 'reissue' of E6000, which suggests that the catalogue numbering structure may have been decided only after the first (positive) zincs had already been processed into (negative) stampers. Known discs dated later than 8 August 1898 (i.e., 11 August onwards) generally have sunken-embossed catalogue number digits (apart from later corrections and additions).
- 38 *A Voice in Time*, p.242.
- 39 Brian Rust disagrees with me on this point, and suggests that the date might be in Gaisberg's hand.
- 40 Lamonte's 'earliest-dated' record is marked '28-8 -98' - a Sunday! However, in 1949, Gaisberg was prompted by Rust's mention of this disc to recall her as his first London recording artist: "I remember Syria Lamonte. [...] She was the first artist I recorded, I'm sure of that ... of course, I don't know if the one you saw was *the* first, but it was made at that first session." (*A Voice in Time*, p.242.) A rival candidate arises when Gaisberg describes his first evening in London, and mentions finding his first recording artist at the Trocadero Grill "in the person of Leopold [sic] Jacobs" (leader of the Trocadero Orchestra). (*Music on Record*, Chapter 2, p.28.) In 1903, the violinist Jacques Jacobs was with pianist Percy Grainger in the singer Ada Crossley's party touring Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. (John Bird: *Percy Grainger*, London, Elek Books, 1976, Chapter 8.) Jacques Jacobs' earliest-recorded published disc was with the Trocadero Orchestra (Gy512, *Poet and Peasant* overture, 6 September 1898. Rust, Kelly), and he made solos from 29 December 1898 onwards. (Disc number 7900, a completely anonymous 'Test Plate' in the EMI Music Archives, which might have been the first violin record, is in fact a cornet solo!)
- 41 Alan Kelly, unpublished list of early London discs.

RICHARD STRAUSS: THE BEETHOVEN RECORDINGS

by Raymond Holden

Part II: Reception

Strauss' recordings of Beethoven's Symphonies Nos. 5 and 7 elicited a mixed response. The American critic, Harold C. Schonberg, states:

His [Strauss'] recording of the Beethoven Seventh, made in the middle 1920s with the Berlin State Opera Orchestra, is amazing. There is almost never a ritard or a change of expression or nuance. The slow introduction is almost as fast as the following vivace; and the last movement, with a big cut in it, is finished in four minutes, twenty-five seconds. (It should run between seven and eight minutes.) ...the records leave a bad impression. They are disgraceful, and certainly no testimony to Strauss's probity.¹

From the evidence above, it is hard to reconcile Schonberg's comments with either the marks found in Strauss' score or the recording itself. However, if one places these remarks within the broader context of Schonberg's discussion of Strauss' activities as a whole, one is aware that they seem to be a question of personal taste.

If one steps back in time to the review found in the September 1926 issue of *The Gramophone*, the critic seems to be more concerned with the qualities of the recording, rather than Strauss' reading. He writes:

This is the first "new method" issue of this symphony, and very tasty it is. ...The wood-wind at the start appears to me a little less full and round than in English recordings by the new process; the strings balance well, and the bass runs are far more effective than in the old records. Scarcely enough is made of the *pp* work — again the old gramphonic defect, but less pronounced than it used to be. In side 2 the strings do not come out so well against the high woodwind, as in side 1, and their tone rather lacks fatness. The metallic quality is not so pronounced as in the earlier British records, but the "body" is somewhat light. The rhythmic swing is well kept up, though the whole is too much on a few dynamic levels. We do not want contrast merely for the sake of excitement, but there are legitimate opportunities for making it that are rather neglected. On page 30 the bassoon is out of truth...²

This excerpt is indicative of the remainder of the review. The "new method" mentioned is the Brunswick 'Light-Ray' method. Whilst, to the ears of the modern-day auditor, this technique lacks a certain degree of definition, it appears to have been held in some regard by contemporary reviewers. If one looks back to the previous issue of *The Gramophone*, where Strauss' recordings of K543 and *Ein Heldenleben* were discussed, the critic there also

1 H. C. Schonberg, *The Great Conductors* (London, 1977), p. 241.

2 *The Gramophone*, September 1926, p. 164.

appears to be in favour of the 'new' recording technique, noting: '...the music [K543] is bodied forth so much more fully than ever before (this is the first "new process" recording of the symphony).'³

In discussing the third movement of Beethoven's Symphony No. 7, the critic notes, 'Apart from a little sobriety, I like it well'. He continues by stating: 'From recent experience I doubt if Strauss *could* be very jolly'. The writer's comment regarding Strauss' sense of humour is somewhat enigmatic. One assumes from the date of the review that the critic encountered Strauss during the latter's visit to London in April 1926, where he performed and recorded the film music to *Der Rosenkavalier*.⁴

The cut in the last movement appears not to have disturbed the critic unduly, but he is, nonetheless, ambivalent towards Strauss' reading. He continues:

The last movement, apart from the cut, is very effective. This is an extremely difficult thing to record well. Strauss, with his present not very subtle methods, brings this off well enough. I personally do not mind the cut very much. There are possibilities in this last movement that no conductor I have heard (except Weingartner) really explores. Under him the work is a great joy. Under Strauss it is a moderately stimulating pleasure, a piece of quite adequate conducting without any hidden marvels. He does not take you by the hand, but conducts the party like a Cook's man. He has, I fear, done it a little too often!

Strauss' perception of Beethoven's Symphony No. 7, and its delivery, raises an issue that is central to his performance aesthetic: his literalist stance. His manner on the podium, along with his broader hermeneutic argument, often led critics and auditors to assume that he was in some way disinterested in the works that he was performing. As such, his style of conducting has been at the centre of a polemic that emerged during the early years of the twentieth century and has continued to this day. On closer examination, however, one becomes aware that his approach to works from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is one of reverence. The present author raised the question of Strauss' apparent disinterest in the works that he was directing with Wolfgang Sawallisch, who said:

That [Strauss' disinterest] is certainly not true. One thing is absolutely true that his conducting always retained a certain distance between himself and the symphonies. Some people have said that his conducting was too cold and with a certain reservation but I feel it wasn't true. He was too great a musician to make too many personal influences in the music. Perhaps for this reason and because he was an active composer that he had such respect and kept a certain distance.⁵

³ Ibid., August 1926, p. 122. The review is signed 'K.K.'. According to Anthony Pollard, at the Gramophone offices, this was probably a pseudonym for Compton Mackenzie.

⁴ Strauss accompanied the silent film version of *Der Rosenkavalier*, at the Tivoli, on 12 April 1926, with the Augmented Tivoli Orchestra. He recorded excerpts from this score on the following two days, at the Queen's Hall, London, with the same orchestra. HMV matrix CR280 II-CR286 IA; single side nos. 4-0829-4-0834; British HMV D1094-6; Electrola EJ35-7; CD re-issue EMI CDC 7546102.

⁵ Interview with the author, the Henry Wood Hall, London, 12 December 1991.

In the review of his recording of Symphony No. 5, found in the June 1930 issue of *The Gramophone*, the question of Strauss' literalist stance is again raised. The critic, W.R. Anderson, writes:

...The urgency in speed is perhaps a little strong, but I like the dramatic tingle in it. Later, I begin to feel a little routinism in some of the effects, which are like many of those the German orchestras and that from Vienna have lately been showing us; still, these things come off: only, there is a little too much regimentation about them, and an inclination in the players, one feels, to peep round and see if you are noticing their neat little effects. The slow movement is broadly done; but again I seem to want rather more gracious stroking than Strauss appears to be using. I fancy his emotion runs less warmly than it used to do. I recollect feeling this when I heard him at his first London appearance after the war. ...This movement [third movement] seems almost too well held in, though it gets a good head of steam as it goes on, and the incisiveness of the playing pleases me well. It just lacks the authentic demonic touch. ...On the whole, a really good "cool head" reading and recording. All I miss is a bit more "warm heart," and the Beethovenian devilry; but where is perfection to be found?⁶

Earlier, it was mentioned that Strauss took a different direction to that of Mahler. It is apparent that the former maintained a degree of distance between himself and the work that he was performing. On the other hand, it would seem, if Bruno Walter is to be believed, that Mahler's personality would have been in accord with Anderson's vision of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5. Walter writes: 'It was the source of the very strong impression of something demoniac in him [Mahler] which made him interesting to everybody and terrifying to many.'⁷

The critic also raises the question of tempo in his review. In the above excerpt, he makes note of Strauss' 'urgency in speed'. In the preceding lines, he remarks:

Strauss has fine qualities of symphonic thought. One is struck at the start by the accentual phrasing of the opening four-note *motif*.

Anderson's comment, concerning the conductor's 'urgency in speed', seems to be referring to passages such as that which precedes the first movement's second subject. Here, Strauss applies an *accelerando*, from an initial tempo of $\text{♩}=96$, at bar 25, to $\text{♩}=108$, between bars 44 and 58. This manipulation is undertaken on structural grounds, alerting the auditor to his reduced tempo at the second subject. It has already been mentioned that Strauss set in place a number of practices and principles in his performances of works from the eighteenth century: his structured manipulation of tempo is central to this hermeneutic argument. For example, in Mozart's symphony, K543, the tempo of the Introduction, the first movement's second subject and the Finale are all linked. He maintains this practice in his recordings of Beethoven. The opening speed of the first, second and last movements of Symphony No. 7 are related: first movement, *Poco sostenuto*, $\text{♩}=63$ (bars 1-9, 23-8 & 42-7); second

⁶ W.R. Anderson, *The Gramophone*, June 1930, p. 23.

⁷ B. Walter, *Gustav Mahler*, trans. L. W. Lindt (London, 1990), pp. 114-5.

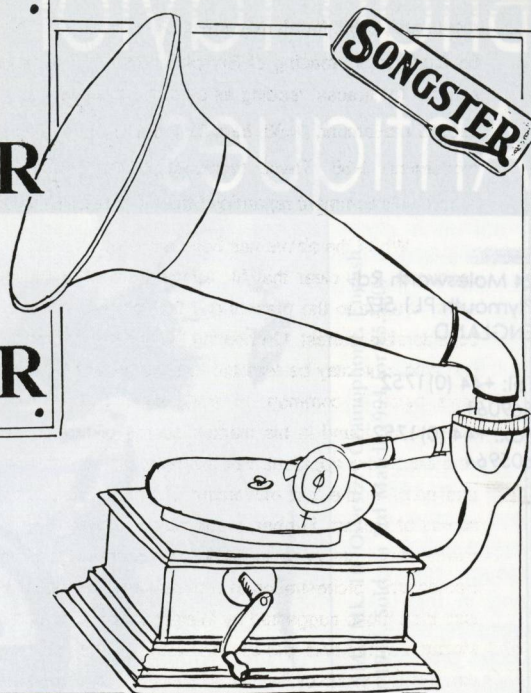
movement, $\text{♩}=63$; fourth movement, $\text{♩}=126$ ($\text{♩}=63$). This structured approach to tempo can also be found in his reading of Symphony No. 5. The tempo 'of the opening four-note *motif*' is seminal to Strauss' reading as a whole: its speed, $\text{♩}=88$, is related to both the tempo of the second movement, $\text{♩}=88$, bars 22 (beat 3) to bar 31 (beat 2), and the pulsar core of the last movement, $\text{♩}=88$. These relationships may have been the stimulus that gave rise to Anderson's comment regarding Strauss' 'fine qualities of symphonic thought'.

Whilst the above has been a cursory discussion of Strauss' activities as a Beethoven conductor, it is clear that his efforts were of some importance. His readings may, at first, seem strange to the present-day auditor; yet, his structured approach to these works is of considerable interest. On hearing his readings of the works of Mozart and Beethoven for the first time, one may be tempted to assume that his performances of these composer's works have much in common. In some ways this is true; however, when one compares the annotations found in his marked scores of Mozart and Beethoven, a number of essential differences are apparent. For example, his use of terms such as '*wild*', '*steigern*' and '*plump und derb!*' in the last movement of Beethoven's Symphony No. 7 cannot be found in his scores of Mozart. Further, in his scores of Beethoven, Strauss left a number of metronome marks: there are none in his Mozart scores. Moreover, it would seem that he re-touched Beethoven's orchestration in a number of passages. Whilst, these alterations appear to be less than those suggested by Weingartner,⁸ it is a practice that he avoids in his readings of Mozart's symphonic and operatic works. These differences give weight to the argument that von Bülow's vision of Beethoven's works was seminal to that of Strauss. Therefore, when one listens to Strauss' recordings of Beethoven, the auditor is not simply confronted with the views of a single artist, but that of a longer, more established, musical heritage.

The end

⁸ cf. F. Weingartner, *Die Symphonie nach Beethoven*, trans. J. Crosland as *On the Performance of Beethoven's Symphonies* (London, 1907).

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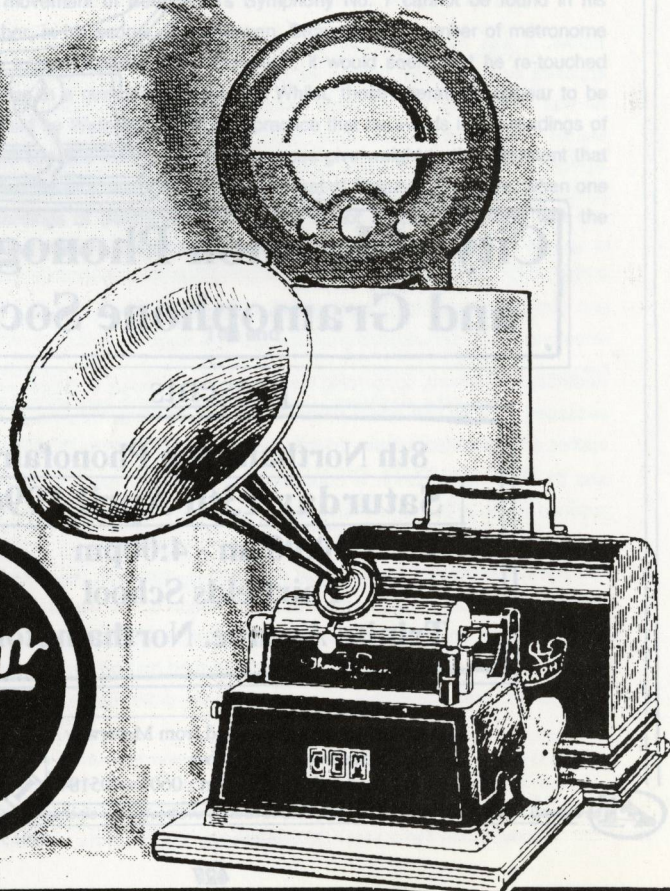
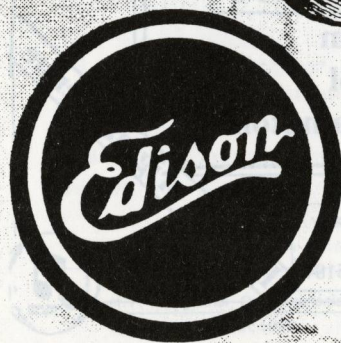
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A NIMBUS EVENING - NOT A CLOUD IN THE SKY

by Phil Bennett

A hot June afternoon, Edward German's *Merrie England* playing on tape within the car, the English countryside at its pristine best, even the temporary traffic lights induced queue of cars on the A449 could not fault the glories of an English mid-summer.

So, revelling in the beauties of the English countryside, I motored across the shires to Nimbus Records on the afternoon of Friday June 23rd 1995. The grounds of Wyastone Leys, home of the Nimbus organisation, were a delight. The driveway winding down through the wooded parkland, the deer lying in the leafy shade and then, as if almost by accident one stumbles across the offices and processing plant, hidden away in a fold in the hills.

A short distance away is the magnificent new concert hall, altogether modern and acoustically superb but looking entirely "at home" in these sylvan surroundings. It was here that Norman White was host to a *Prima Voce Programme* that very evening and a few members of C.L.P.G.S. had been invited to mount an exhibition of vintage talking machines in support of the event.

The concert hall is, of course, the home of the famous Nimbus reproducing horn, by which means the company faithfully transfers the voices of the "golden age" to CD. I had of course seen photographs of this device, but no photograph can do it justice. Computer designed for acoustic perfection and linked to an EMG type sound box via a specially made tone arm, the horn is about 18 feet long with a diameter of some 6 feet at the bell and constructed in fibreglass rather than the papier mâché of its EMG forerunners.

I am pleased to report that our little exhibition was well received and included a splendid facsimile replica of a "tin foil" phonograph and a top wind "trade mark" gramophone, both from Richard Taylor's collection, several excellent Edison machines, horn gramophones a-plenty and my Aeolian Vocalion representing the "modern" cabinet machines.

The Prima Voce Programme featured many fine early recordings and the use of a variable speed transcription deck ensured that these records were played at the correct speed. Of particular interest was the Fonotipia recording of *Quando ero paggio* from Verdi's *Falstaff* sung by Victor Maurel with its mock encores. Francesco Tamagno's G&T of *Niun mi tema* from *Otello* also came over very well. However to my ear it is with early electric recordings that the Nimbus comes into its own as amply demonstrated by Chaliapin's Victor recording of the *Death Scene* from Massenet's *Don Quichotte* when the full bodied richness of this famous bass filled the hall. Unfortunately an over-ambitious programme meant that certain records had to be cut from the planned schedule and as a result we were unable to hear the 1935 recording of Granville Bantock's *Song to the Seals* sung by John McCormack with his spoken introduction.

I can honestly say that our Society was privileged to be represented at this unique event. To be able to hear the Nimbus system in action is something that I shall not forget in a hurry and I know that those of us who were there are looking forward to the next time.

RESTORING DIRTY AND DULL SURFACES

by Mike Field

The surfaces of the wooden cases of gramophones and phonographs are often grimy and dull when first acquired. As the original polish is much prized, it is generally accepted that repolishing is a last resort. Provided that the surface is intact, not crazed or flaking, there is something that can be done to improve things while still retaining the original polish.

A general household cleaner known as Chemico Cream Cleaner made by the County Chemical Co. of Shirley, Solihull can be very effective in restoring the original shine. Simply place a generous amount of the cream on a clean cloth and rub onto the surface. On the first application there will be a lot of dirt removed. Repeat with a clean portion of the cloth and then vigorously polish with another clean cloth. You will be pleasantly surprised!

The method can be used over intact transfers but more care and less vigour is required. If the surface is cracked or crazed the method will not be successful. It will remove the dirt but the cream will dry into the crazing thus highlighting it in white. Very artistic but not what is wanted! A mixture of Toluene and white spirit *sometimes* will soften the polish sufficiently for the surface to flow and restore a smooth appearance but care is needed to avoid 'pick-up' and so

making things worse. If you feel like trying it, practice on a less visible part.

The painted metal surfaces of machines, particularly the Edison Gem and Standard phonographs, are usually varnished over the stove enamel. This varnish, apart from becoming dirty, can become semi-opaque and crazed due to the action of the atmosphere over many years. If the condition is unacceptable it is possible to remove the old varnish and leave the original paint, gold lining and transfers in almost original condition. Common methylated spirits is the solvent to use. Thoroughly wet a cloth in the spirit and rub a small area of the surface. A lot of dirt will come off in the first application. Repeat several times but watch the gold lining and transfers very carefully. If there is any sign of the gold coming off stop the process. After any of the applications of spirit try polishing the still wet surface with metal polish, again taking extreme care over the gold linings etc. It is possible to remove the old varnish, but you may find after one of the metal polish treatments the result is as you would wish. It is better to stop with a good result rather than risk the final application and lose a gold line. Re-varnishing is a matter of preference (and skill) but I would recommend leaving the surface unvarnished.

C.L.P.G.S. Booklist

There may be some delay in fulfilling recent orders. This is due to changes that are taking place in the administration of the Booklist. Please bear with us as we are doing our best to despatch all orders. Full details of the changes will be given in the next issue of *Hillandale News*.

C.L.P.G.S. Directory

Midlands Group Secretary: Phil Bennett,

Wolverhampton WV6 0JW

Northern Group Secretary: Mrs Anne Mallinson,

Cumbria LA13 0HO

Clockwork Music Group:

H. P. Bailey,

Tyne and Wear NE16 4ES

Forthcoming Meetings in London

London Meetings are held at the National Sound Archive, 29 Exhibition Road, South Kensington, on the third Thursday evening of the month promptly at **6.45pm** (unless stated otherwise). Members' attention is drawn to the London Meetings Notice on page 100 of issue 188 (October 1992).

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| December 21st | Annual Christmas Celebration - bring along a favourite record and enjoy a seasonal refreshment. |
| January 18th 1996 | Geoff Edwards - <i>Seats in All Parts</i> (Cinema Centenary Celebration). |
| February 15th | Jonathan Dobson will talk on <i>British Pianists</i> and will give many interesting aural illustrations. |
| March 21st | Chris Hamilton will talk about <i>Scottish Music Hall</i> |
| April 18th | Frank Andrews - <i>We Have Our Own Records</i> - Part 4 |

BILL BRYANT



Bill Bryant (left) and Paulo Gruppé
(the cellist who recorded for Edison)

Bill Bryant died on 27th September 1995 alone in his home in Congress Street, Portland, Maine. William (Bill) Bryant may not be a name familiar to most members of the Society, but he was a friend and discographer, well-known to fellow discographers on both sides of the Atlantic. I began writing to Bill, many years ago, after he first wrote to me after reading some of my articles published in *Hillandale News* and *Talking Machine Review*.

Our first matter of interest concerned the early Zon-o-phone and Vitaphone businesses in America and their connections with British and European markets and the setting up of Zonophone in Germany. Another subject we had extended correspondence about was the introduction of the Climax and subsequent Columbia disc records, firstly in America and then their introduction to Britain and Europe. One of Bill's projects was a complete discography of the Columbia cylinder and disc output by the earlier Columbia companies in America. I had much help from him regarding some of the Regal records in the complete catalogue compiled by Arthur Badrock and myself. Another of Bill's projects which caused a flow of letters across the ocean was a listing of discs under the Leeds and Catlin labels, discs which became available here as Imperial, Concert and Nassau records, besides other labels confined to the U.S.A.

I know from other correspondents in America, that he has been of immense assistance to many discographers with help from his own researches and tape dubbings of records in his own collection. He assisted the A.R.S.C. when they held a conference at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, devoted to the subject of Bohumir Kryl, the celebrated cornettist.

Fred Williams, the well-known military and concert bands expert and historian, told me that Bill had been the most important of helpers among collectors as far as he (Fred) was concerned.

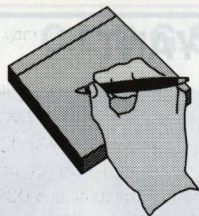
Bill was made responsible for ensuring that the very large amount of discographical data amassed by another American, Karl Kendzoria, went to discographer George Blacker. Fred Williams then convinced Blacker that both his and Kendzoria's data should be willed to Bill Bryant. I understand that this happened and that now that Bill has died, his own researched work along with the other two is to be taken into care by Martin Bryan and Tim Brooks.

On a more personal note; during the many years I had been in touch with Bill (always at the same address) his mother died and then his father died leaving him alone as he was an only child. Once, when Bill's father went to Paris for a holiday, he rang me from an airport to send me Bill's best wishes. Bill's mother sent my wife, Wyn, a cookery book she had published for close friends and relatives. This was devoted to old-time recipes, many of which we have since thoroughly enjoyed.

The losing of distinguished discographers Len Watts and Bill Bryant, in such a short space of time, has turned this into a very sad year for me. They were staunch colleagues and friends and will be sorely missed. I hope that the results of their years of research will be published making the material available to all.

Frank Andrews

LETTERS



Stephen Foster

Dear Mr Hamilton,

I am delighted to acknowledge receipt of copies of *Hillandale News* No.206, October 1995, containing the fine article by Peter Cliffe entitled *Weep No More, My Lady: The Life and Songs of Stephen Foster*. Mr Cliffe's information on twenty recordings of Foster's songs will be very helpful to us and users of our library on Foster at the University of Pittsburgh.

In a collegial spirit I offer a few addenda and corrigenda to the article. Mr Cliffe, in describing Foster's life and career, too readily accepts romanticised representations of the composer's personal habits and predilections, images perpetuated among scholars and the wider public who have not seen the sources that were closest to Foster himself.

Foster may appear to have "lacked the business acumen to derive a comfortable income" from his songs, but he was the first songwriter to attempt to live solely on the income from sales of copies of his music to the public, without recourse to an author's copyright, to performance rights, or to legal assistance. Only if they became their own publishers or performers did songwriters of his era derive significant income from their works. That Foster succeeded in sustaining himself at all as the first professional songwriter is a remarkable accomplishment.

The notion that Foster's 2 "drinking ultimately destroyed him" was first suggested by rival writers of temperance hymns and has been enhanced by biographical film makers for dramatic effect. Yet he lived "from hand to mouth" not because he spent all his money on alcohol, but because no

publisher would grant a royalty contract for songs during the American Civil War. The causes of his separation from his wife have never been satisfactorily explained, in part because his brother destroyed any evidence he thought would sully the family name.

I would add that we can not hear Foster's minstrel songs without reacting through the racial sensibilities of our own era, of course. But it might interest your readers and listeners to know that *Old Uncle Ned* was considered the first song written for the minstrel stage that was openly critical of slavery. *Massa's in de Cold, Cold Ground* fits within Foster's attempt to humanise the minstrels' depiction of slaves of compassion rather than of ridicule. *My Old Kentucky Home, Good-Night* appears in Foster's first sketchbook draft as *Poor Uncle Tom, Good-Night*, clearly inspired by Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* which had appeared earlier in the year 1852. *Old Black Joe*, also known in Britain as *Poor Old Joe*, contains nothing in its original lyric that is racially unacceptable; such aspersions seem entirely due to various connotations of the term "black" during intervening generations.

Finally, one small correction: *Beautiful Dreamer* was held by the publisher for at least a year, then issued only after the composer's death.

The Stephen Foster Memorial at the University of Pittsburgh has authenticated Foster's entire compositional output, which is available in a two-volume set *The Music of Stephen C. Foster: A Critical Edition*, edited by Steven Saunders and myself, and is published by the Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington and London in 1990. We are always happy to respond to reference inquiries.

Yours sincerely,
Dr Deane L. Root, Curator, University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.

Vinyl Obsolete?

Dear Chris,

I, like many others, would challenge the notion that disc-cutting is obsolete. There are lads here, in Holland and the U.S.A. who would swap their wives for a can of 10" acetates.

The CD process is not inherently bad, a field researcher (F. Gaisberg?) for a record company has been here to audition my Edison Triumph and Amberola III. The owner of a very small local company, using DAT for mastering, asked my assistance in buying a Nagra. He hates his 10 year old obsolete lump - the poor fellow prefers the 'soul' of the thing and can't understand why subjectively it is better than DAT. Products of Nimbus and Symposium are listened to with pleasure in this household, whereas discs marked DDD (Digital record, edit and play) go back P.D.Q.

Every week I have letters from world-wide, swapping notes on Presto, M.S.S. and BBC 'D' recording lathes. Companies and individuals are only now realising that the acetate is still a valid medium and want to make sure the skills of years are not lost and an indefinable 'soul' with them.

Try and define the thoughts of a visitor on hearing an EP from my Presto - "O, that's rather lovely", when a CD doesn't get a look in, for my wife starts describing in lay terms a 'cello work on the Blue Amberol and takes the floor!

I have heard of the Nagra Smart-Card machine, but as my Nagra IIIs c.1968, give very fine results, why change! Even Japan, I understand, has now 'come round and hear my vinyl' evenings.

We learn to our cost that the 'high-tech' catalytic converter petrol driven car does not make bicycles obsolete. I have one problem - the Class M jumps when I go over drain lids!

Enjoy life, it's too short,

John R. Gomer, Colchester, Essex

[Much as though we may regret it the analogue recording and the LP are obsolete. They are now regarded by most recording enterprises as totally out of date. I must confess that I have had many hours of enjoyment from some very fine recordings in DDD. I can get totally wrapped up in the performances. Like all recording engineers, practisers of the art of recording in DDD need to be extremely skilled in their job, know their medium inside out and have a good musical sense. Unfortunately not all modern recording engineers fall into this category and in the early days of CD most of the recordings had rather an unpleasant coarse sound. In recent years their expertise has improved beyond all recognition and many excellent digital recordings are now produced. I do not play vinyl recordings so often nowadays because of the one major drawback they have. That is noise. It is almost impossible, these days, to prevent one's vinyl records from collecting dust and static in our modern centrally heated homes. This noise, unlike that from 78s, is not constant. It is of a variable constancy and pitch and is much more obtrusive. The other great advantage of CD is the ability to find individual tracks on the record by courtesy of one's remote control. As I get older I value this facility more and more! That does not mean that I don't enjoy listening to the vinyl record. Ed.]

Help Please

Dear Sir,

Could anyone give me information about the link between the Compagnie Belge Chantal (who sold records and gramophones under their own trademark) and Vocalion in Great Britain?

In my collection I have got Broadcast 8" records, some of which are Belgian pressings (Cie Vocalion Chantal). Here is one example: No. 246 (246A and 246B) a bell solo by Billy Whitlock. I've also got a 12" Chantal de Luxe (matrix 2370), double-sided with Jean Noté (baritone) singing one of Massenet's opera arias (Herodiade). It is pressed in England for Cie Belge Chantal, probably by Vocalion.

Yours faithfully,

Armand Mangin, [redacted]
[redacted] Ostend, Belgium

Violet Elliott

Dear Sir,

With so much correspondence recently regarding Ruby Helder 'The Lady Tenor' does anyone know anything about Violet Elliott, apparently billed as 'The Lady Bass'? Three records by her (which I have never seen or heard) are listed by Bennett, but I have never heard her mentioned anywhere else.

Yours faithfully,

Michael Walters, Tring, Hertfordshire

Another request for help

Dear Chris,

A plea for information. While searching to find out the normal r.p.m. of a Graphophone cylinder (not a Dictaphone) I came across a reference to a Detective Disc Recording Machine of 1892. The clockwork motor gave a recording time of 20 minutes and the reference goes on to state that the machine was used to record a number of famous actors of the day (presumably not because they had committed a felony). The reference is *Veteran Talking Machines* by Brian Jewell, Midas Books 1977, p14. A small monochrome illustration is included and a better colour one can be found in the Sunday Times magazine for 11th December 1977. Can anyone supply more details of the machine and its use? How fast did a Graphophone cylinder rotate?

Yours sincerely,

George Taylor, [REDACTED]

Harrogate, N.Yorks. MG2 0LE

Military Bands

Dear Chris,

I've subscribed to *Hillandale News* off and on since the magazine started. I have often wondered if any of our members specialise in military band/concert band recordings.

Over the years I've amassed a large collection of cylinders, 78s, LPs, cassettes and CDs of such material. I've written articles for the *Association of Recorded Sound Collections Journal* and the *American Bandmasters' Association Journal of Band Research*. I have given sound and slide shows to several organisations and have written an 84-page discography on Italian and Italian-American bands and wind and percussion solos, duets etc. I also contributed information to Paul Charosh, which he used in his book *Berliner Gramophone Records - American Issues, 1892-1900* reviewed by Peter Adamson in your last issue.

I point all this out because I'm trying to find kindred spirits in the U.K. (or anywhere else). I'd be grateful if any readers who can help me would contact me at my address given at the end of this letter.

Sincerely,

Frederick Williams, [REDACTED]

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19118, U.S.A.

C.L.P.G.S. BOOKLIST

Edison Laterals 3: Hot Dance of the Roaring 20s

This CD, which is reviewed by Paul Collenette on page 438 of this issue, is now available from the Booklist. Price £13 plus postage and packing U.K. £1.30 and overseas £1.95.

C.L.P.G.S. Booklist, c/o Don Moore, [REDACTED]

Caistor, Lincolnshire LN7 6RX

Vitaphone Project

Dear Chris,

David Goldenberg's article on the Vitaphone Project was very interesting to anyone with a penchant for popular music during the inter-war period. He correctly lauds the TNT Channel (supplied to all basic Sky subscribers) for broadcasting numerous short features. To this one might add the recent screenings on Channel Four of those featuring Hal LeRoy, Ruth Etting, and so on, many directed by Joseph Henabery, who was mentioned in the article. The problem with the TNT screenings, of course, is that the shorts are never listed in the programme guides, so unless one follows the channel assiduously, catching those which may be especially worthwhile is somewhat hit-or-miss.

Two shorts caught personally almost by accident on TNT this year appear to be of particular significance to at least some readers of this journal. *The Voice That Shook the World* is a Warner Brothers short from 1942, directed by Jean Negulesco, who later made a significant number of worthwhile features. The featurette chronicles the various attempts to link sound to film, passing briefly through the efforts of Edison and other early sound pioneers.

The second is an MGM effort entitled *The Fiesta at Santa Barbara* Undated and with no director credit, it features sundry MGM players at the event of the title. What made me do a double-take was a snatch of the three singing Gumm Sisters, one of whom, of course, was Judy Garland. None of the Garland filmographies that I've seen list this, and one even states categorically that the sister act was never filmed. As I say, the short as screened gives no copyright credit, but looking at Judy's age (she was born in 1922) I would estimate about 1935. That is, a year before her appearance in perhaps the most famous of all shorts *Every Sunday* (director: Felix Fleist), in which she co-starred with Deanna Durbin (and which, incidentally, has been broadcast twice by Channel Four over the past few years). That Louis B. Mayer let Durbin go, and how she went on to save Universal Studios from its imminent bankruptcy, is a matter of record. But any Garland fan ought certainly to try and catch the Santa Barbara item, and it should be added to all future filmographies and histories of popular music.

Sincerely,

Keith Chandler, South Leigh, Oxfordshire

PAUL MORRIS

will be having an 'At Home' in his 'new' (1891) house on
Saturday 16th December 1995 from 7pm onwards.

Please come and enjoy some mince pies, Devonshire Cream and, of course, some records. Some accommodation is available by prior notification.

A reward will be offered to the person who has travelled the greatest distance.

I look forward to seeing you at

██████████ Exeter, Devon EX4 4HE

Tel: ██████████

REVIEWS



Edison Laterals 3: Hot Dance of the Roaring 20s

A further CD in the series from Diamond-Cut Productions is most welcome, and this one gives us a cross-section of Edison Dance bands of 1928-29. The 21 tracks are of course rare, though 5 were issued on laterals, 17 on Diamond Discs with 3 also on Blue Amberol.

Edison started recording laterals for issue at matrix N100 in February 1928 and stockpiled them. In January 1929 they opened new studios on 5th Avenue, New York and started signing up more modern talent. Whereas TAE had insisted on the instrument-separation given by a 'dead' studio, by now a more resonant sound was preferred.

The CD itself is printed with a reproduction of the 'Edison Needle Type Electric' label - which was the only one without a picture of TAE. A 12-page booklet is included, with title, matrix and date information (though I cannot see any sequence to the tracks). The artwork is appropriate, except for a picture that Mr Edison would **not** have approved: a Columbia AT Graphophone!

The notes are by jazz writer and broadcaster Rob Bamberger, who writes knowledgeably about dance music styles. The laterals, though were not launched in July, but August 16th 1929 - and were on sale for just 10 weeks. There is useful information about B. A. Rolfe Edison's top bandleader. This CD could almost be subtitled *The B. A. Rolfe Album*, as he appears on 8 tracks. He was famous for his NBC radio programmes sponsored by Lucky Strike cigarettes.

Four tracks are by the Piccadilly Players, who could be regarded as Edison's number 2 house band. There are two numbers by the Seven Blue (not 'Blues') Babies. The vocalists are not listed - I have noted them when known to me. The Edisongsters consisted of Will Donaldson,

J. Donald Parker, Phil Dewey and Frank Luther.

- 1) *Sunny Skies* (Piccadilly Players dir. Mel Morris). Brisk, incisive opening number with good trumpet.
- 2) *Wipin' the Pan* (Bernie Stevens Orch.) Wow! A hot number for Edison, especially the trumpet. Why on earth was this number rejected for issue - could it have been that the composer (Nat Shilkret), was Musical Director for Victor? The band had another try on 19th April, but that was still rejected. It has a resonant sound - the new studios, or added echo? - and a vocal by (I think) Billy Murray. Please Diamond Cut, let us have this band's only two other recordings some time.
- 3) *Hittin' the Ceiling* (Piccadilly Players). The clumsy percussionist is busy again - otherwise the band's usual neat styling, with an oboe solo.
- 4) *That's him now* (Seven Blue Babies). The band directed here by Ed Kirkeby, with seven of the ten California Ramblers: nice trumpet. Vocal is by Ermine Calloway, who sings in the boop-a-doop Helen Kane style.
- 5) *It must be love* (B. A. Rolfe's Lucky Strike Orchestra). Here is Edison's exclusive, versatile and expensive (up to \$1,200 per session instead of Edison's usual \$300) band. Vocal is by Theo Alban, also a studio regular.
- 6) *Dance Little Lady* (B. A. Rolfe). Over-syncoated: vocal by Theo Alban
- 7) *Building a nest for Mary* (Al Friedman Orchestra). Very open acoustic. Take H, but they got it good! Excellent precision with muted trumpet fill-ins. A Germanic sounding gem from this underrated band; my favourite on the album. Vocal by the Edisongsters?
- 8) *I'll get by* (B. A. Rolfe). A bassoon solo! Theo Alban gulps his vocal entry. Played much faster than this ballad warrants. Very deep sound at end - what is it?
- 9) *I want to meander in the meadow* (Phil Spitalny's Music). Breakneck pace - 66 bars per minute! Advanced arrangement with amazingly dextrous piano. Vocal by the Paull Sisters. Issued on lateral and Diamond Disc.
- 10) *Caressing You* (Mike Speciale Orchestra). More restful than the others.

- 11) *Let's Do It* (B. A. Rolfe). Interesting, varied orchestration except for sawing violins; good xylophone solo. Theo Alban again.
- 12) *My troubles are over* (Duke Yellman Orchestra). Vocal by J. Donald Parker
- 13) *Makin' Whoopee* (B. A. Rolfe). Incisive playing; vocal by J Donald Parker again.
- 14) *Glad Rag Doll* (Golden Gate Orchestra). The California Ramblers with their confident, relaxed beat.
- 15) *Easy Going* (Piccadilly Players). Good trumpet and baritone sax.
- 16) *I Can't Give You Anything But Love* (B. A. Rolfe) Bassoon introduction again! Tricky over-orchestrated concert arrangement - Rolfe trying to outdo Paul Whiteman. Don't call us... Vocal - Theo Alban.
- 17) *Hello Sweetie* (B. A. Rolfe). Okay B. A., we'll keep you on. No introduction or verse, it goes straight into chorus. Accordion solo - a novelty for 1929. Neat xylo solo - nice track altogether. Vocal by the Edisonsters?
- 18) *Give Your baby Lots of Love* (Seven Blue Babies). Hot clarinet and trumpet; vocal by Ermine Calloway.
- 19) *Someday Soon* (Piccadilly Players). The clumsy drummer is back. Vocal - J. Donald Parker.
- 20) *Singing in the Rain* (B. A. Rolfe) Atmospheric arrangement, vocal by J. D. P. again. The latest track (recorded 16/7/29).
- 21) *Where the Shy Little Violets Grow* (Oreste and His Queensland Orchestra). Stock arrangement: vocal by Theo Alban.

Hot Dance of the Roaring 20s? Well, warm. The performances are rather more patchy than volumes 1 and 2 in the series.

Sound quality: with Edison's RCA recording lathes and Diamond Cut's D-Card process, it's top-notch. Surface noise (sometimes heavy on the pressings) is negligible.

Enthusiast of mainstream dance music and Ediphile rarity-hunters will go for this CD.

Hot Dance of the Roaring 20s - Edison Laterals
3 Diamond Cut Productions DCP-202D is

available from the **Society's Booklist** at **£13** plus **£1.30** (U.K.) and **£1.95** (overseas). It is available in the USA direct from Diamond Cut Productions, PO Box 305, Hibernia, NJ 07842-0305 priced at **\$17.98** plus **\$4.00** post and packing.

Paul Collenette

Joseph Hislop - The Songs of Scotland

Joseph Hislop spent much of his early working career in Sweden with the Royal Opera House, Stockholm. He also had several seasons at Covent Garden in the 1920s. He made his final appearance at the Royal Opera House Stockholm in October 1937. Much of his recording career was devoted to the popular repertoire and it is Scottish songs and ballads from this repertoire that has been collected here on this CD.

Hislop gives us many fine renditions of well-known songs such as *Afton Water*, *Annie Laurie*, *The Land O' The Leal*, *An Eriskay Love-Lilt*, *The Lea Rig*, *My Love is Like a Red, Red Rose*, *Bonnie Wee Thing* and *Turn Ye Tae Me*. He also sings many other lesser-known Scots songs. The accompanists vary from Percy B. Kahn and Clarence Raybould on the piano, through Marjory Howard on the violin, Cedric Sharpe on the 'cello to the conductors Leslie Heward, Clifford Greenwood and John Barbirolli. There are 20 tracks of well-chosen Scots ballads that demonstrate Hislop's lovely tenor voice to advantage. I was happy to be reminded of these enjoyable songs and ballads sung by one of Scotland's greatest singers.

However there one serious criticism that I have of this CD. That is the quality of the transfers. The unknown transfer engineer has filtered out so much of the surface noise of the original 78s that he has removed most of the ambience of the original recordings and they sound terribly dull and muted and to get the best enjoyment out of these recordings I had to draw the originals from my shelves and play them instead of the CD. As a result I can only give this CD a qualified recommendation. For those.

who have not access to the originals and who are unable to play them this CD will give them a glimpse, albeit faint, of the lovely voice of Joseph Hislop. This CD, **Moldart Music MIDCD 003**, is available from all good record shops priced at around **£8.99**.

Chris Hamilton

Melodeon Greats - A Collection of Melodeon Masterpieces, Topic TSCD 601

In the days of LP Topic issued an LP called *Melodeon Greats* on Topic 12T376. That LP had 16 selections. For this CD they have been newly transferred and nine extra selections have been added.

The melodeon, or accordion as it was often known, is an instrument with one or more rows of button keys operating on a simple push-pull bellows action. The notes in this well-produced CD tell us that it was invented in the 1820s. Melodeons were manufactured in vast numbers on the continent and imported in large quantities to this country. In my young days in the Highlands of Scotland, where I was brought up, there were still entertainers around who played the melodeon even though it had largely been superseded by the piano accordion. This CD gives us an excellent insight into to the sound of an instrument and a style of playing that has now been forgotten.

The artists on this CD are James Brown, Fred Cameron, W. F. Cameron, 'Pamby Dick', William Hannah, Peter Leatham, Daniel Wyper, Peter Wyper and Jack Williams. All except Jack Williams are known to have been born in Scotland. I enjoyed this CD immensely. My two favourite tracks are those of W. F. Cameron playing *Flowers of Edinburgh* and Peter Wyper playing *The Dancing Dustman - Two-step*. Another track that I especially liked was William Hannah playing *Pibroch O' Donald Dhu*. William Hannah was one of my favourite melodeon players and I own several of his recordings. He made records for Winner, Waverley and Parlophone. The only electric recording on this CD is by Daniel Wyper made for Imperial in October

1926. This is a selection of Scotch Reels; *Roll Her On the Hill*, *Soldier's Joy*, *Clean Peastrae* and *Fairy Dance*. Interestingly the sound is little different from those made by the mechanical process. There is a little more extended bass but otherwise the sound could be much earlier. The transfers on this CD are excellent. They were done by Adrian Tuddenham, who has managed to remove most of the irksome surface noise and yet retain the freshness and immediacy of the original recordings. There is an excellent set of notes by Keith Chandler with this CD. They give brief biographical details of the artists, where known, and a comprehensive discography of the original records used in this CD. However for some reason details of three of the recordings have been left out: the two Jack Williams recordings *Queen Mary Waltz* and *Bit O'Blarney* and one by James Brown *Miss Drummond of Perth*. For those who purchase this CD I give the correct details as follows:

Jack Williams: *Queen Mary Waltz* recorded March 1914, Matrix 4014, Winner 2578

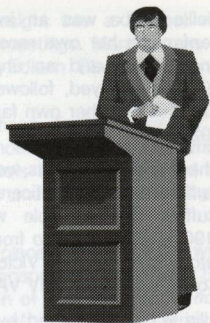
Jack Williams: *Bit O'Blarney* recorded March 1914, Matrix 1119, Winner 2579

James Brown: *Miss Drummond of Perth*, recorded November 1912, Matrix y10693e, Zonophone 1149

I can thoroughly recommend this CD. It can be obtained from most good record shops at around **£11.99**. I had not come across Topic CDs until this one arrived on my desk. I hope Topic Records will be re-issuing more interesting material from 78s in the near future.

Chris Hamilton

REPORTS



London Meeting, July 20th 1995

Tom Little has discovered an unusual theme for a gramophone recital - it may not be original - but we cannot remember a dinner menu having been represented by gramophone records.

Like all memorable occasions we had time to set the scene by playing *Underneath the Arches* as the location and *All in the April Evening* for the time.

Aperitifs were represented by Harry Lauder in a beverage well-known to emanate from his country and Gus Elen imbibing *Half a Pint of Ale*. For those who were driving and were members of a temperance organisation Robert White performed an Airlie Dix composition *The Trumpeter* (from a RCA tape which included all four verses).

After settling into their places, the audience were treated to the *Hors d'Oeuvres*. Sid Phillips and His band played *Hors d'Oeuvres*. Adelina Patti sang *Voi che sapete* and Bebe Daniels and Ben Lyons duetted *Three Little Fishes*.

Danny Kaye ushered in the main course of *White Duck* whilst the Andrés Quartet played an extract from Schubert's *Trout Quintet*. Arthur Hall related the *Three Little Pigs* from a Little Tots Nursery Tune record.

Condensed from 14 hours to a mere 10 minutes the musical chef supplied his special based on a Fauré score as enacted annually at Bayreuth - *The Ring Quadrille*. In this enlightened age Tom remembered those palates not excited by the prospect of flesh. Vegetarians were offered Mr Robeson singing *Shortening Bread* and the Peerless Orchestra played *Beets and Turnips*. This section concluded with *The Parade of the Sandwich Men* played on the piano by Eric Parkin.

For those souls who had some space left, the dessert trolley contained a creation called Peach Melba with Caruso sauce duetting in *La Bohème*. Tchaikovsky obliged with a frosting of Sugar Plums extracted from *The Nutcracker* and Pamby Dick, our resident accordeonist, realised *Four Little Blackber-*

ries. This was served on a 10" record, which Frank Andrews informed us, was recorded in Glasgow.

'Gentlemen may smoke' or 'lighting up time' was represented by Frank Crumit singing *Abdul Abulbul Amir*, whilst we all sat back and allowed Gracie Fields to entertain us with what she herself stated was 'my first Rex record' in which she sang *Turn Herbert's Face to the Wall*. She was followed by Webster Booth in *Macushla*. Top of the Bill in this section was reserved for Max Miller live from the Metropolitan Theatre, Edgware Road, London in November 1957.

Evelyn Laye, born on 10th July 1900 and still alive, sang *A Glass of Champagne* to send us on our way. (Your reporter should never have divulged a lady's age - but this was an occasion!)

The diners appreciated all the above musical extracts. Tom illustrated many records with adverts, scenes and sleeves to enrich their enjoyment. The theme gave those present plenty to savour and their appreciation of the evening left them travelling home trying to think of other musical gastronomic delights which would or could have been included in their perfect musical meal.

Thanks Tom for the clever presentation of such a memorable subject.

George Woolford

Extraordinary General Meeting, October 19th 1995

Dr Peter Martland, the Chairman of the Society, opened the meeting and invited the Treasurer, Chris Hamilton to give an update on the Society's financial affairs. The latest accounts were circulated and approved. Chris explained that due to an unprecedented increase in the cost of paper *Hillandale News'* production costs had increased. He proposed an increase of £1 in the Society's annual subscription from 1st March 1996 to cover this cost. This was seconded by the Chairman and approved by the meeting. The new rates are now £13 for the UK and Europe and £14 or \$26 for the rest of the world.

Peter Martland gave an update on the Society's incorporation as a company limited by guarantee and on its registration as a charity. The new company *City of London Phonograph and Gramophone Society Ltd.* should be incorporated by Christmas with the registration as a Charity to follow early in the new year. Peter then closed the business part of the meeting.

Ariel

London Meeting, October 19th 1995

The meeting on October 19th should have been presented by our London Chairman, George Woolford, but as he was just beginning to recover from a nasty motor accident, his programme was presented by Chris Hamilton, who we were pleased to welcome from North Britain. Its title *Live or Wire* was an enigma soon revealed - simply artists who recorded for the acoustic horn and later for the microphone, most of the illustrations being two versions of the same piece, but generations or more apart. Usually these started with the old method and finished as electric with 'spot the join' in the middle.

An interesting start was Backhaus' playing of Grieg's *Piano Concerto* within the 8-minute scope of two 12" sides, Landon Ronald having edited pages out of the score.

The eminent tenor Edward Lloyd made two sessions of *Bonnie Mary of Argyle* in 1904 and then 1908 for G&T, to correct blasting tendencies in the first.

Earlier, Ben Davies had started disc recording in 1901, and we heard his records of *I'll Sing Thee Songs of Araby* on Dog Monarch 02003 (1902) and latterly on Columbia DB 1430 (1933). How well his voice had retained its quality.

A comparison of different songs by Harry Plunkett Greene followed - *Little Mary Cassidy* on G&T (1906), and from 1934 *Trotting to the Fair* on Columbia DB 1377.

Another great concert performer and teacher of those days was the German-born baritone Sir George Henschel (b.1850 and the senior performer of the evening). He started as a pianist at the age of 20, but soon showed command of every discipline of music. He made just two sets of vocal recordings, accompanying himself on the piano, and the following versions of *Der Erlkönig* were played: HMV matrix Ai 7896f and the electric Columbia L 2303 of 1928.

After the men came the ladies, firstly with the remarkable Clara Butt with examples of *Land of Hope and Glory*, 1927 version (Columbia 7373) and the earlier version (HMV 03239) recorded in 1911. From correspondence in the gramophone press of the day Dame Clara expressed resentment at the fact that HMV still offered her pre-war records when she was contracted to Columbia from 1916, considering them inferior.

In comparison, the Scottish Mary Garden was diminutive at 5ft. and specialised in the French composers. She sang two extracts from *Depuis le Jour* from Charpentier's *Louise* on Victor 6623 and Columbia A 5440.

Nellie Melba was an institution in her own right, demanding her own record label and retail price of one guinea, and an unpublished distance test of 1910 was played, followed by HMV DB 943 *Mimi's Farewell* from her own farewell at Covent Garden in 1926.

The last pair of artists were the Italian baritone Titta Ruffo and the magnificent British bass Norman Allin. Ruffo's first example was from G&T 2-252621 (1907), *Spirito Santo* from Ambrose Thomas' *Amleto*, and the electric Victor of 1927 of a *Romanza* by Costa, issued on HMV VA 55 in 1951.

Allin was represented by two records of the same piece of music, *The Midnight Review* by Newmarch and Glinka, on an acoustic Columbia L1474 of 1923 and its electrically recorded replacement on Columbia 9874.

During the evening our entertainment was well cared for by George Woolford's tape, but the ever-present enemy time and a short business meeting of the Society meant that several items had to be left out, and we look forward to another of George's programmes of this quality, and wish him an early recovery.

A London Correspondent

Midlands Group Meeting at Carrs Lane Methodist Centre, Birmingham, September 16th 1995

This evening was devoted to two programmes on cylinder records. The first given by Morris Woodward was an account of the military band in the recording studio with musical illustrations, all on 2-minute cylinders.

After the opening overture *Light Cavalry* (Edison Bell) Morris explained that the earliest cylinders of the subject were of bugle calls, made to instruct the young boys being trained for the purpose of becoming buglers and drummers. These were the original field communications before wireless telephony.

We then heard cylinders of popular songs of the day played on the cornet. This was followed by full military bands playing a wide range of music. We learnt that representatives of the recording companies - not the least Edison - toured the various military barracks endeavouring to entice the bands to make recordings.

Morris then gave us a varied selection of music such as: *Weymouth Chimes* with the Irish Guards; *Gems from Iolanthe* with the British Military Band and *Figures from the Lancers* with the U.S. Army Band.

This was a fascinating insight into a subject not previously covered at our meetings. Many thanks to you, Morris, and to your Edison Standard Phonograph.

After the tea-break Richard Taylor gave us a programme of jazz on cylinders. This was, of course, all on Edison Blue Amberols and Richard used an Edison Home Phonograph and an Edison Amberola 30 to play them on.

Starting with a ragtime piece *Operatic Rag* with Sodero's Band we were transported to 1919 with the Frisco Jass Band's version of *Umbrellas to Mend* - illustrating the influence of the pioneer Original Dixieland Jazz Band.

Other examples of the leading jazz exponents (who recorded on cylinder) between 1924 and 1926, played by Richard included: *Charly My Boy* with the Georgia Melodians; *Yellow Dog Blues* with Harry Raderman's Jazz Band; *Tie Me to Your Apron Strings* with the Tennessee Happy Boys and *I Came, I Saw, I Fell* with Kaplan's Melodists.

Enthusiasts of this type of music will appreciate how rare jazz cylinders are. Many thanks to Richard for gathering these together to present such a fine programme.

Geoff Howl

Midlands Group Phonofair at St. Matthew's Church, Wolverhampton, September 23rd 1995

It is pleasing to report an increase in attendance at this year's event. There was a wide variety of well-stocked tables of gramophonic goodies. There seemed to be something for everyone.

We are grateful to Don Moore for bringing samples from the Society's Booklist. He sold more than 200 pound's worth of goods.

Some visitors travelled long distances. For instance Chris Hamilton came from north of the border and others from as far away as Cornwall, Devon, Herefordshire and Suffolk.

The catering was excellent, supplied by the ladies. They had completely sold out before the day finished. The weather was fine. What more could we want? Just more punters to support this friendly event when we repeat the exercise in about twelve month's time.

Geoff Howl

Northern Group Meeting, July 16th 1995

Visitors made their long journey, in mixed weather, to the Meeting, in Barrow, at the home of Ann and Miles Mallinson.

The highlight of the meeting was a 'Concours d'Élégance for Gramophones and Phonographs'. Ten members were entered for the competition; the winners were as follows:

Mike Burns with his wooden-horned 'Monarch' came an easy first in the gramophone section, followed by a 'Bingola' Toy Gramophone owned by Don Watson.

The phonograph section was won by Derek Pepperdine, with his Edison Standard, Model 'B', followed closely by Mark Robinson's 'Puck'.

Many thanks to all members who brought their treasured machines for the competition, it made for a good 'talking point' and 'broke the ice' with new members being involved. Home cooking, supplied by Mrs Ann Mallinson and Mrs Pauline Parker, completed a very pleasant afternoon.

Ann Mallinson

Northern Group Meeting, September 17th 1995

Armley Mills Museum, Leeds was the venue for the September meeting., which was attended by 18 members, who were invited to 'play their favourite record'. A wide and varied selection was the result. Two examples of *O Isis and Osiris* from Mozart's *The Magic Flute* sung by Robert Radford and Oscar Natzke opened the event. A 'propaganda' record circa 1914 by Charles Tree followed. Then came Isobel Baillie singing *Let the Bright Seraphim Crazy Kids* played on a barrel organ circa 1936 was next. To follow we heard Joan Hammond and David Lloyd singing a duet from *La Boheme*. Other items played were an Imperial Novelty record (which amused all present), *Run, Rabbit, Run*, with reference to Adolf Hitler, Stanley Holloway reciting the *Return of Albert* and Humphrey Lyttleton playing *Bad Penny Blues*.

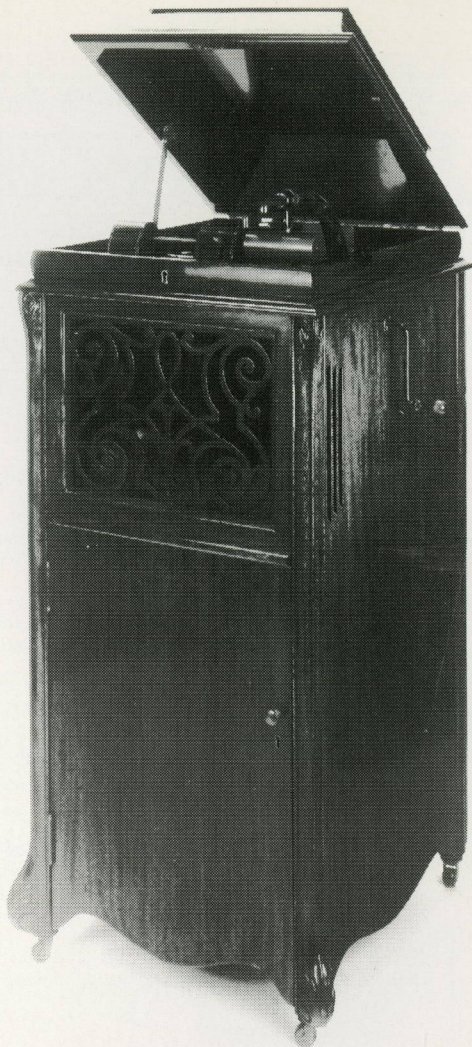
We ended with a rendering of *Land and Hope and Glory* sung by Carrie Herwin on a centre-start Pathé disc. (Len Watts would have liked that.)

The afternoon finished with tea and cakes supplied by Mrs Pauline Parker and Margaret Hebden. Many thanks to them for giving us succour.

Ann Mallinson

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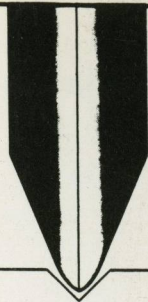
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